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## IRISH COME-ALL-YE'S

## BY PHILLIPS BARRY

That the Irish population of our large cities have had considerable part in the preservation of traditional songs and ballads, is a fact, perhaps known, but which has attracted little attention among folk-lorists. It is true, nevertheless. In the "come-all-ye's" of the Irish folk-singer, one finds endless variety. Not all of them are Irish, by any means. Some are historical ballads of comparatively recent date, as "Brennan on the Moor;" others—for example, "The Test of Love"—are based on themes as old as the world. A few must be classed as "traditional lyrics." The following songs and ballads, noted down during the past two years from the lips of singers in Boston, Mass., and elsewhere, are herewith, as representative specimens of favorite comeall-ye's, offered to readers of this Journal.



- 1. It's false Sir John's a courting gone,
- 2. "Take off, take off that suit of Holland, That suit of Holland so fine, For it is too rich and too costly, To rot in this salt sea brine!"
- "It's look you round, my false Sir John, To view the green leaves on the tree,"—
- <sup>1</sup> Many Irish historical ballads begin with the phrase "Come, all ye," . . . but folk-singers apply the term quite indiscriminately to all classes of traditional song.
- <sup>2</sup> William Brennan, hanged for highway robbery in Co. Cork, 1804. See letter of Frank Kidson, quoted by Cecil J. Sharp, in *Folk-Songs of Somerset*, p. 70.
- <sup>8</sup> "Erin's Green Shore," "Nora McShane," etc. Some songs by Moore and Lover have passed into oral tradition.
- 4 "Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight," H, Folk-Songs of the North Atlantic States, from S. C., Boston, Mass., native of Co. Tyrone.

And when he turned him round to view, She threw him right into the sea!

4. . . . . . . . . .

"Of all the promises ever I made, I'll double them every one!"1

It's seven King's daughters you have drowned here, And you the eighth shall be."

6. . . . . . . . . . .

And when she came to her father's gate, The clock had just struck one.

- 7. "It 's hold your tongue, my pretty parrot, And do not discover on me, And your cage shall be made of the beaten gold, Instead of the chestnut-tree!"
- 8. Then up and speaks her old father,
  In the chamber where he lay,
  "What ails you, what ails you, my pretty parrot,
  You prattle so long before day?"
- 9. "The cats they have come to devour me, And tear me clean away, And I was calling to Mary Goldan To drive those cats away!"
- 10. Then he speaks, her father, In the chamber where he lay, "Oh, did n't I tell you, Mary Goldan, You'd rue your going away!"<sup>3</sup>
- <sup>1</sup> A Sligo version ("Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight," B, from E. R., Vineland, N. J.) has the following stanza: —

"O give me a hold of your little finger,
And a fast, fast hold of your thumb,
There's not a promise that ever I made,
But I'll roll it in one bun!"

<sup>2</sup> S. C. sings the line also,—

"Instead of the hazel-tree."

<sup>8</sup> "Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight" is well known to Irish singers. The various forms of the name, Colvin, Collean, Collenendee, Goldan, Goldin, Polly, etc., are evident corruptions of Irish cailin. In another version (E, from M. J. P., Peoria, Illinois, native of Fulton, Missouri) the event is actually located in Ireland,—

"Mount up, mount up, my pretty Colendee, Mount up, mount up," said he,  $\mathbf{H}^{1}$ 



Where were you all day, my own pret-ty boy? Where were you all day, my



heart's lov - ing joy? I was fish - ing and fowl - ing, moth - er,



make my bed soon, I'm sick to my heart, and I want to lie down.

- "Where were you all day, my own pretty boy?
  Where were you all day, my heart's loving joy?"
  "I was fishing and fowling, mother, make my bed soon,
  I'm sick to my heart, and I want² to lie down."
- 2. "What had you for dinner, my own pretty boy? What had you for dinner, my heart's loving joy?" "I had salt eels and pizen, mother, make my bed soon, I'm sick to my heart, and I want to lie down."
- 3. "What will you leave your brother, my own pretty boy, What will you leave your brother, my heart's loving joy?"
  "I leave him my horse and my hounds, mother, make my bed soon, I'm sick to my heart, and I want to lie down."
- 4. "What will you leave your sister, my own pretty boy? What will you leave your sister, my heart's loving joy?" "I leave her a fortune, mother, make my bed soon, I'm sick to my heart, and I want to lie down."
- 5. "What will you leave your father, my own pretty boy? What will you leave your father, my heart's loving joy?" "I leave him my blessing, mother, make my bed soon, I'm sick to my heart, and I want to lie down."

"And I will take you away to the far Scotland, And there I'll marry thee, thee, thee, And there I'll marry thee!"—

a fact which recalls the Connemara tradition mentioned by Professor Child (English and Scottish Popular Ballads, vol. ii, p. 496).

<sup>1</sup> "Lord Randall," V, Folk-Songs of the North Atlantic States, from A. W., Brunswick, Maine, native of Co. Clare.

<sup>2</sup> Or "faint."

6. "What will you leave your girl, my own pretty boy? What will you leave your girl, my heart's loving joy?" "I leave her a barrel of powder, to blow her up high! For I'm sick to the heart, and I want to lie down." 2

TIT 8



There was a shep-herd's daugh-ter was herd-ing on you hill, And



by there came a no - ble knight, who fain would have his will,



- r. There was a shepherd's daughter was herding on you hill, And by there came a noble knight, who fain would have his will. Ta rum ding fa doo, my delpha maid, Ta rum ding fa doo, ma dee.4
- 2. He catched her by the middle small, and tossed her on the plain, And when he got his will of her, he took her up again.
- 1 Or "blaze her up high."
- <sup>2</sup> Two stanzas of another version ("Lord Randall," W, from G., an Irish singer living in Brunswick, Maine) are worthy of inclusion here, by way of comparison: —

"What is it you leave to your mother, my handsome fine boy? What is it you leave to your mother, my heart's loving joy?" "The gates of Heaven open, mother make my bed soon, For I'm sick to the heart, and I want to lie down."

"What is it you leave to your wife, my handsome fine boy? What is it you leave to your wife, my heart's loving joy?" "The gates of Hell open, mother make my bed soon, For I'm sick to the heart, and I want to lie down."

A melody to an unrecorded version of this ballad is in the Complete Petrie Collection of Irish Music, No. 330. Cf. also P. W. Joyce, Old Irish Folk-Music, p. 394. A Gaelic version, taken down from one Rogers of Co. Roscommon, has been published by Douglas Hyde (Eriu, ii, 77, An Irish folk-ballad).

3 "The Knight and the Shepherd's Daughter," A, Folk-Songs of the North Atlantic States, from S. C., Boston, Mass., as sung by a Scotch laborer in Co. Tyrone, Ireland.

4 Gaelic:

Táim dian fadh tú, mo dealbhach maed, Táim dian fadh tú, mo daoi,

which is, being interpreted,

"I am violent because of you, my handsome maid,"

"I am violent because of you, my man."

3.	"Sometimes they call me Jack," he said, "sometimes they call me John But when I am in the King's court, they call me Sweet William."
4.	When she came to the King's court,
5.	"Has he robbed you of your purse of gold, or of your penny fee?"
6.	"He has not robbed me of my purse of gold, nor of my penny fee, But he took from me the fairest flower belongs to my body."
7.	"It's if he is a married man, it's hanged he shall be, And if he is a single man, his body I'll grant thee!"
8.	"There's no Sweet William in my court, but one, but two, but three, There's one Sweet William, my sister's son, I'm afraid it must be he."
9.	He called upon his merry men, by one, by two, by three,
10	. "It's here, take this, my pretty fair maid, and look out for a nurse."
11	. "Oh, hold your tongue, my pretty fair maid, you'll make the case look worse,  If I have given you a British crown, you have it in your purse!"
12	. "If I'd been drinking water, instead of drinking wine, There's not a fair maid in this land would have entered in my mind."
	The ancient British ballad, in the strictest sense of the word, — that is, including

only the three hundred and five items in Professor Child's English and Scottish Popular Ballads, — is far better known to Irish folk-singers than has hitherto been supposed. The Complete Petrie Collection of Irish Music contains melodies to "The Twa Sisters" (Child, 10), "Lord Randall" (Child, 12), "Captain Wedderburn's Courtship" (Child, 46), "Lord Lovell" (Child, 75), "The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington" (Child, 105), and "Johnie Cock" (Child, 114). P. W. Joyce, in Old Irish Folk-Music, gives melodies to "The Elfin Knight" (Child, 2), "Lord Randall" (Child, 12), "Young Beichan" (Child, 53), "The Gypsy Laddie" (Child, 200), "The Jolly Beggar" (Child, 179), "The Golden Vanity" (Child, 286), "Captain Ward" (Child, 287). In my own collection, Folk-Songs of the North Atlantic States, I have taken down from Irish singers versions of "Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight" (Child, 4), "Lord Randall" (Child, 12), "Lord Lovell" (Child, 75), "Bonny Barbara Allan" (Child, 84), "The Famous Flower of Serving-Men" (Child, 106), "The Knight and the Shepherd's Daughter" (Child, 110), "Katharine Jaffray" (Child, 221), "The Jolly Beggar" (Child, 279), and "The Keach in the Creel" (Child, 281). A manuscript collection of Irish airs in the Boston Public Library contains melodies to the following: "Lord Lovell" (Child, 75), "The Maid Freed from Gallows" (Child, 95), and "Captain Wedderburn's Courtship" (Child, 46).

IV 1



- I. "I once had a sweetheart," said she, "It's seven long years since I did him see, And seven more will I wait on, Till he returns for to marry me!"
- 2. "If it's seven years since you saw your lover, Perhaps by this time he is dead and gone, But come with me, I'll make you a lady, You shall have servants to wait on you."
- 3. "If he is living, I love him dearly,
  If he is dead, I wish him good rest,
  But no other young man shall ever enjoy me,
  Till he returns for to marry me!"
- 4. And when he saw that she was so loyal,
  He thought it a pity for to see her lost,
  He says, "Am n't I your loving sweetheart,
  That has come home for to marry thee?"
- 5. "If it's you are my loving sweetheart,
  Your hands and clothing they do not agree!"
  But seven years make great alterations,
  And so it was with this gentleman.
- 6. He put his hand into his pocket, His poor fingers being both long and small, He pulled out a ring between them was broken, And when she saw it, she down did fall.
- 7. He stooped low for to lift his lover, And unto her he give kisses three, He says, "Am n't I your loving sweetheart, That has come home for to marry thee?" 2

<sup>1</sup> "The Test of Love," A, Folk-Songs of the North Atlantic States, from S. C., Boston, Mass., native of Co. Tyrone.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The ancient theme of the Returned Lover is one of the oldest, as well as most wide-spread, of motifs in folk-ballad and folk-epic. As classic examples, the myths of Odysseus, Agamemnon, and Diomedes are familiar to all. Variations of the theme, however, are well-nigh innumerable. An interesting discussion of the subject, with more or less detailed



Willy Taylor, a nice young sailor,
 Full of love and unity,
 First he went for to get married,
 Next he was pressed on board of sea.
 Fand the deeden an tan nura nido,
 Fand the deeden an tan nura nee.

treatment of the more common variants in modern folk-song, is to be found in *Der Heim-kehrende Gatte und sein Weib*, by Willy Splettstösser, Berlin, 1899. The author distinguishes six forms, under which the different variations of the theme may be conveniently grouped:—

- r. Woman unfaithful.
- 2. Lover arrives in time to stop a wedding.
- 3. Lover proves woman's fidelity by a love-test.
- 4. Woman stolen, lover goes in search of her.
- 5. Lover finds woman in great poverty.
- 6. Lover steals woman, who has been abused by her parents.

In English ballads, besides "The Test of Love," variations of the theme occur in "Hind Horn," "The Kitchie Boy," "Katharine Jaffray," "Lord William," and "The Demon Lover." In the last, the theme is carried into the domain of the supernatural. Inversions of the theme are found in "Young Beichan" and "The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington." Many versions of "The Test of Love" are known to Irish singers; in one version, the incident is located on the banks of Claudy, in Donegal. Two stanzas from a German parallel are worthy of citation:—

"Gestern war's drei Wochen über sieben Jahr, Da mein feins Liebchen ausgewandert war." "Gestern bin ich geritten durch eine Stadt, Da dein feins Liebchen hat Hochzeit gehabt."

"Was thust du ihm denn wünschen,
Das er nicht gehalten seine Treu?"
"Ich wünsche ihm so viel gute Zeit
So viel wie Sand am Meere breit."

(Wunderhorn, p. 38, ed. Etlinger.)

This variation of the theme, in which the love-test is by a tale of infidelity on the part of the lover, is found also in some English versions (see "Popular Song in Missouri," "The Returned Lover," by Henry M. Belden, in L. Herrig's Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Litteratur, vol. cxx, pp. 63 ff.

1 "William Taylor," A, Folk-Songs of the North Atlantic States, from S. C., Boston, Mass., native of Co. Tyrone.

 She dressed herself in man's apparel, Changed her name to Richard Carr, Her long fingers, small and slender, All besmeared with pitch and tar.

The silver buttons flew off her jacket,
And the captain saw her milk-white breast.1

- 4. "If you are in search of Willy Taylor, I think I know that same young man, He has got married to a handsome lady, And they both live convenient to the Isle of Man."
- 5. "Get up early in the morning, Walk down by yon silver strand, Where you'll get your Willy Taylor, And his lady by the hand."
- She got up early in the morning,
   And walked down by yon silver strand,
   Where she got her Willy Taylor,
   And his lady by the hand.
- 7. "Oh, false young William, false young William, What in the deed's that you have done, Them that has you may enjoy you, But they won't enjoy you very long."
- 8. "Get to me my case of pistols,
  A case of pistols at my command!"
  She fired and shot young William Taylor,
  And left his lady on the strand.
- Another version (E, from O. F. A. C., Harrisburg, Pa.) has this stanza as follows: -

On deck one day, they raised a skirmish, She amongst the rest was one, She unbuttoned her coat, threw open her waistcoat, And her lily-white breasts were shown.

- <sup>2</sup> Another version (E) makes William Taylor to be a Manxman.
- <sup>3</sup> Two stanzas from E may be cited in comparison: —

"Oh," cried she, "young William Taylor, It is from you that I bear this mark, Them that has you shall never enjoy you." Then she shot him through the heart.

Big tears were in her eyes a-falling, Straight on ship-board she did go, The whole ship crew all strove to save her, But overboard herself she threw.

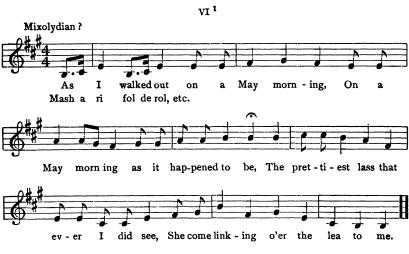
The account of the tragedy given in this version is absolutely unique.

9. The captain saw the deed she 'd done, And all that was with him saw it too, He made her his bride and chief commander, Aboard of the ship called "Lovely Ann."

The theme of "William Taylor" is a combination of two motifs. One is an inversion of one form of the Returned Lover (compare also "Young Beichan," into which a similar inversion is introduced); the other is the Woman-disguised-as-Man, a motif also quite widespread in popular tradition, and especially common in later British balladry. The ballad itself was current in eastern Massachusetts as early as 1790, according to the evidence of the following melody from a manuscript of that date:—



It is still a favorite with Irish singers in this country; numerous broadsides attest its popularity in England.



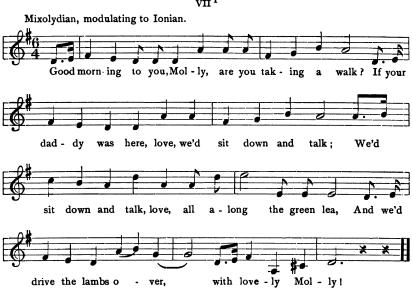
As I walked out on a May morning,
 On a May morning, as it happened to be,
 The prettiest lass that ever I did see,
 She come linking o'er the lea to me.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> "Tripping over the Lea," B, Folk-Songs of the North Atlantic States, from S. C., Boston, Mass., as sung by a Scotch laborer in Co. Tyrone, Ireland.

Mush a ri fol de rol fol de rol lol, Mush a ri fol de rol fol de rol lol lol, The prettiest lass, etc.

- 2. I took her by the middle small And gently laid her on the ground, I scarcely kissed her once or twice, When she smiled and said, "Not a day too young!"
- 3. "Your wedding day may pass aside, For I never intended to make you my bride, And of all the diversion that ever we had, I'm sure you've got your fair divide."
- 4. "I wish my baby it was born, Sitting on its dadda's knee, And me laid in the silent dust, And the green grass growing over me."





- 1. "Good morning to you Molly, are you taking a walk? If your daddy was here, love, we'd sit down and talk. We'd sit down and talk, love, all along the green lea, And we 'd drive the lambs over, with lovely Molly!"
- 2. "Yonder is my father, now feeding his flock, Go ask of him a ewe lamb, that will bring you to stock.

<sup>1 &</sup>quot;The Shepherd's Daughter," A, Folk-Songs of the North Atlantic States, from E. R., Vineland, N. J., native of Co. Sligo.

Say that you'll feed her, all along the green lea, And you'll drive the lambs over, with lovely Molly."

- 3. "Good morning to you, old man, are you feeding your flock? I've come for a ewe lamb, that will bring me to stock, — I will carefully feed her, all along the green lea, And we'll drive the lambs over, with lovely Molly."
- 4. "Go down to yonder valley, and choose out your lamb, Go choose out a ewe lamb, the best one you can. If you say that you'll feed it, all along the green lea, We'll drive the lambs over, with lovely Molly."
- 5. Over goes Johnny, and takes Molly by the hand, And before the old father, those couple do stand, "This is the ewe lamb, that I asked from thee, And we'll drive the lambs over, with lovely Molly."
- 6. "Was there ever an old man, so plagued as I am, To give my one daughter instead of a lamb? But now as it happens, then so let it be, And we'll drive the lambs over, with lovely Molly!"



- Early early all in the spring,
   When gentle small birds begin to sing,
   Changing their notes from tree to tree,
   As the sun arose over yon green valley.
- 2. For six long months my love she did prove kind, And then six after, she changed her mind, Saying "Farewell, darling, I must away, You know my parents I must obey!"
- 3. He held her fast, he would not let her go, Saying, "Mary, Mary, my mind you know, Fulfil those vows you made to me, As the sun arose over yon green valley!"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> "Early in the Spring," A, Folk-Songs of the North Atlantic States, from S. C., Boston, Mass., native of Co. Tyrone. Except in the last stanza, repeat third and fourth lines as refrain.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The presence of this stanza connects the ballad with the Returned-Lover cycle. A

- 4. "It was on a book, love, you made me swear, If you read these few lines, you'll find it there, That I can't marry, nor no one take, Nor when you're dead, love none for your sake!"
- 5. "I'll think no more of her yellow hair, Her two black eyes are beyond compare, Her cherry cheeks, and her flattering tongue, It was it beguiled me when I was young!"
- 6. Down in yon valley all closed around, There's nothing there, but the small birds' sound, I sing one verse, and I sing no more, Since the girl has left me that I adore! I change my mind like the waving wind, And I'll dote no more on false womankind!

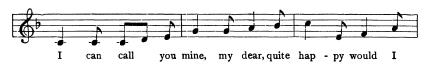
A fragment, sung by S. C. to a melody closely similar, may well be from another version of this ballad:—



seven years' service in the King's navy.

"McLeane the Journeyman," A, Folk-Songs of the North Atlantic States, from S. C., Boston, Mass., native of Co. Tyrone.

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be, And my hand-some lit - tle girl, won't you pad the road with me?

- r. "Oh, pretty little girl, come till we set the time That you and I'll be married, and I can call you mine, That I can call you mine, my dear, quite happy would I be, And, my handsome little girl, won't you pad the road with me?"
- 2. "If I's to pad the road with you, then I'd be much to blame, Besides, my mother has none but me, and I don't know your name."—
  ". . . the maids they know me well, My name's McLeane the Journeyman, which many a maid can tell!"
- 4. "A fig for you and your lap-dogs, your jaunting-car likewise, I'd rather have a young man, with two bright sparkling eyes, I'd rather have a young man without a penny at all, That would take me in his arms, and roll me from the wall!"

The Irish folk-singer, with his come-all-ye's, enables us to trace from several points of view the processes, inventive and re-creative, by which folk-songs come to be. He makes no distinction between earlier and later balladry; a good song with a good melody needs no further recommendation. Wherefore, if we are to hold to a view that there is a difference in kind between, say, "Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight" and "William Taylor," due to a difference in origin, — that is, the one being the last stage in a long process of growth, extending back to the communal incoherencies of prehistory; the other an artistic product of an age that can read and write, — the problem presents for us only difficulties more serious than those we have solved. The re-creative processes of popular tradition have had the same effect on both. Why make a distinction, when the folk makes none? It is no argument to point contemptuously to the multitude of broadside ballads of the sixteenth century and later, that have perished. Moreover, a further result of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> "Our Good Man," in the familiar broadside version, was translated into German by F. W. Meyer in 1789; since then the ballad has passed into oral tradition in Germany,

the re-creative process, which has affected all alike, to the extent of the differentiation of variants, is the so-called "ballad mosaic." Out of the detritus of several ballads a new one is formed, sometimes coherent, yet more often clumsily wrought.

A typical specimen of a ballad mosaic may here be put in evidence:—

## SONG ENTITLED MOLLIE BAWN 2

- I am a wee lassie whose fortune was low,
   To whom I fell a-courting a young sailor boy,
   He courted me early, by night and by day,
   But now he's gone and left me, he's gone far away,
   But now he's gone and left me, he's gone far away!
- 2. I'll build a wee boatie, I'll build it on shore,
  If he ever returns to me, I'll crown him once more,
  If he ever returns to me, I'll crown him with joy,
  And I'll kiss the ruby lips of my own sailor boy,
  And I'll kiss the ruby lips of my own sailor boy.
- 3. As Mollie went a-walking, a shower it came on,
  She went under a green bush, till the shower it was o'er,
  Her apron been around her head, I mistook her for a swan,
  And by my sad misfortune, I shot Mollie Bawn,
  And by my sad misfortune, I shot Mollie Bawn.
- 4. Oh, Mollie, lovely Mollie, since I have shot you, dear,
  Through the wild woods I'll wander, for the sake of you, dear,
  Through the wild woods I'll wander, by night and by day,
  And I'll never fulfil my rambles, till the moon shines clear day,
  And I'll never fulfil my rambles till the moon shines clear day.

Many come-all-ye's have refrains. Of these refrains, a certain proportion, at least, are Gaelic, as the refrain to "The Knight and the Shepherd's Daughter." <sup>4</sup> It is generally supposed that the refrains of

Scandinavia, and Hungary, showing the usual effects of communal re-creation. See John Meier, Kunstlieder im Volksmunde, No. 156.

- <sup>1</sup> See "Folk-Song in Missouri, Bedroom Window," by Henry M. Belden, in Herrig's *Archiv*, vol. cxix, p. 430.
- <sup>3</sup> "At the Setting of the Sun," C, Folk-Songs of the North Atlantic States, MS., forwarded by M. L. F., Portland, Maine.
- <sup>8</sup> The theme of this ballad, apart from the first two stanzas, which are from a different source (cf. "The Wagoner Lad," Ballads and Rhymes from Kentucky, by G. L. Kittredge, in this Journal, vol. xx, p. 268), is the Supernatural-Lover (bird or fish). It is found also in "The Earl of Mar's Daughter" and "The Great Silkie of Sule Skerry." In both is mention made of killing the supernatural being when in the non-human shape. Another variant is the Irish folk-tale, "The Mermaid."
  - <sup>4</sup> The familiar "Shule aroon," a Gaelic refrain, is easily made out, —

ballads are the oldest part, going back to the incoherencies of the "singing, dancing throng." The presence, however, of Gaelic refrains to English ballads, shows that in these several instances the refrain is a later addition.

Siubhal go den duras, agus eligh liom, Is go de tú, mo muirnin slán, —

which is, being interpreted, "Walk, walk, my love, walk quietly and walk boldly, walk to the door and flee with me! Here's a health to you, my darling!"

The refrains of most of the later ballads are so much corrupted that they cannot be interpreted.

33 BALL St., BOSTON, MASS.